

MEASURING SYNDICATION

Background

One of the benefits which Libraries Australia provides to member libraries is described in the 2007 Value Statement¹ as data syndication. It is defined as 'a method for bringing the general public to Libraries Australia, even if they initially know nothing about the service'. When a patron starts a search in a search engine such as Google, the results can provide a direct link to the patron's local library or to other holdings in Australia.

Syndication is arranged by the National Library in a brokering role on behalf of all contributing Australian libraries. It takes the form of both record seeding into search engines², and exchange with larger data aggregators such as Google, Yahoo, OAIster, and WorldCat which provide open access to information.

In particular the National Library has ensured through its 2007 Agreement with OCLC that the visibility of Australian library collections increases for the benefit of Australians and other interested parties alike. Additional services, such as the exchange of data between OCLC and Google to make more full-text content available in Google Book Search, ensure that Australian libraries are linked to where possible.³

The need to measure

While these arrangements seem like good ideas, it is important to measure their ongoing success.

In May 2007, OCLC presented its findings on the impact made by opening up WorldCat for open access⁴. Some of the findings included the effect on referrals which the incorporation of a modest little search box such as this one can generate.



The other measure which is mentioned by OCLC is its international web site ranking. This ranking is a useful benchmark for determining trends and for comparative purposes, which this paper now discusses.

Many agencies use a free service called Alexa to determine their international site ranking. In 2007, WorldCat.org (previously Open WorldCat) was ranked 19,652 out of billions of web sites.

¹ Libraries Australia Value Statement

<www.nla.gov.au/librariesaustralia/documents/value_statement_2007.pdf>

² A description of seeding techniques and their effects is provided at "*Exposing the deep web to increase access to library collections*" <www.nla.gov.au/nla/staffpaper/2005/boston2.html>

³ *OCLC and Google to exchange data, link digitized books to WorldCat*
<www.oclc.org/news/releases/200811.htm>

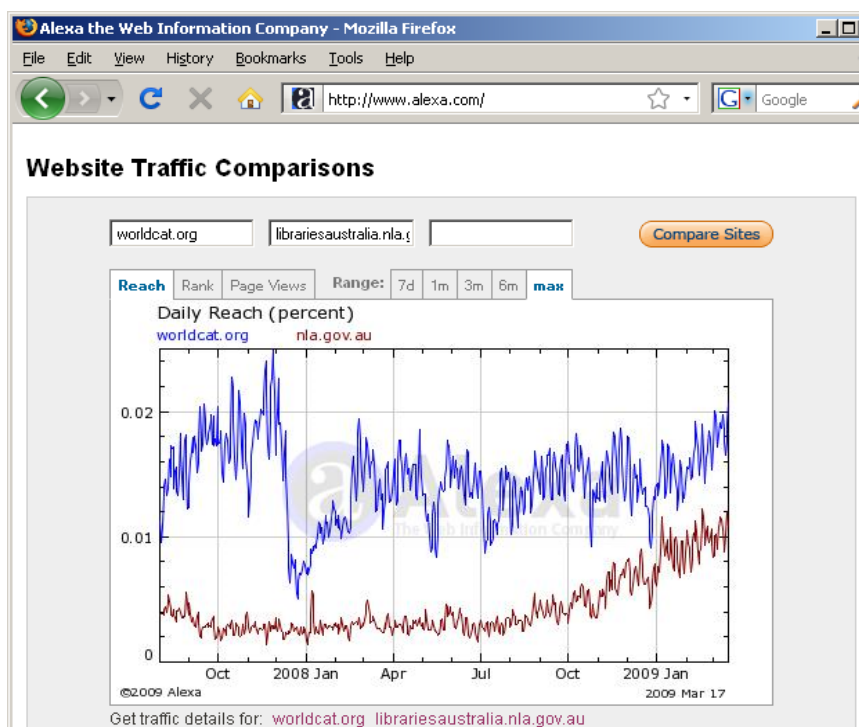
⁴ *Accessing library materials via Google and other Web sites*, Janifer Gatenby,
<http://elag2007.upf.edu/papers/gatenby_2.pdf>

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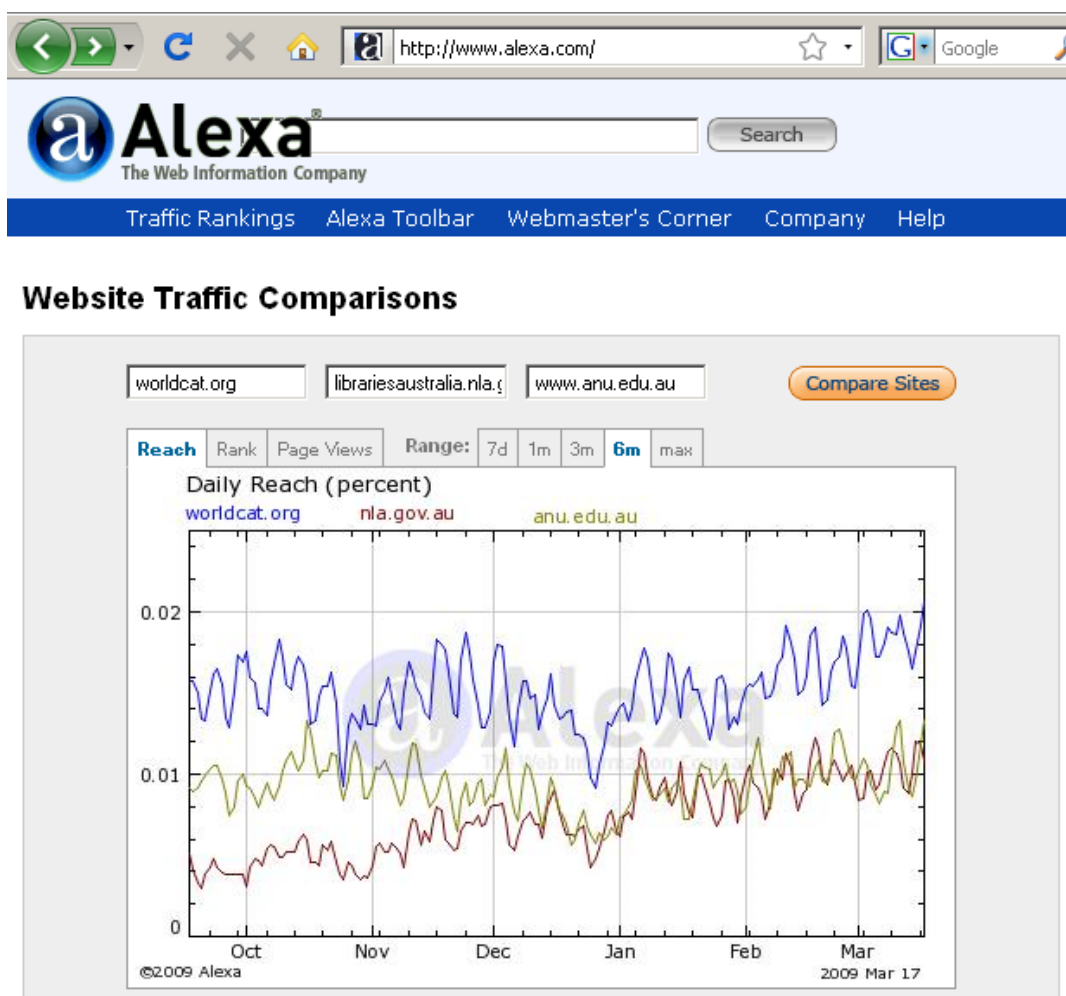
Some Australian university libraries have advised that they do their own seeding to Google Scholar and the like, which will influence their ranking. In March 2009, some comparative rankings, based on host URLs, appeared as follows:

Sample	International ranking	Ranking in home country	Ranking of library sub-domain
WorldCat in May 2007	19,652		
WorldCat in March 2009	6,509	3,779	
Libraries Australia March 2009 nb. The host URL is nla.gov.au	12,544	360	n/a
Monash University	6,187	131	10.6%
University of Sydney	8,441	140	5.4%
University of New South Wales	8,841	164	1.0%
Australian National University	11,093	324	?
University of Queensland	11,688	233	6.4%
University of Technology, Sydney	18,012	234	17.7%
University of Western Aust	20,736	489	not shown
University of Adelaide	20,902	545	8.2%
Macquarie University	22,515	286	1.7%
Swinburne University of Tech	23,102	284	2.1%
University of Western Sydney	30,694	237	1.5%
Deakin University	31,679	476	not shown
University of Southern Qld	41,692	787	not shown
University of Tasmania	43,371	566	1.7%

Note these rankings would need to be recorded on a regular basis to observe trend data. Alexa provides another tool which shows longitudinal trends:



It is possible to also do a three-way comparison, for example:



Conclusion

Fluctuations at large libraries, such as university libraries, may be due to the academic calendar. The National Library will continue to work with Google and other destinations to improve traffic to Libraries Australia, but the value of seeding Australian library records to WorldCat is consistently demonstrated.

Recommendation

The Libraries Australia Advisory Committee to note the report.

Collaborative Services Branch
Contact: Debbie Campbell
dcampbel@nla.gov.au
02 6262 1673

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